

Chief of Base, Munich

Attn: ☐

Chief of Mission, Frankfurt

Operational/C&AT

Info: ES
Vlan
PCB

Suggestion for operation against Johann SANITZER

Ref: (1) EGBA-5572, 22 May 53; (2) EGOA-19068, 18 June 53;
(1) EGBA-6954, 28 July 53

1. Despite your reference three, in which you say that you are not contemplating mounting an operation against SANITZER and do not consider your leads sufficient to justify mounting such an operation from WGB, we believe that your lead to Franz Josef SUBER is the most valuable asset in the SANITZER case which has yet turned up. SUBER is potentially valuable for two reasons: he is a figure of probable interest to the Russians, and secondly, the outward circumstances of his life since 1945, if known or made known to the Eastern services, would make it plausible to them that SUBER might be favorably disposed toward the East.

2. Before launching into the operational proposal, we might perhaps review post-war facts known about SANITZER. The single definite fact in the case is that he was removed by the Soviets in 1949 from the Austrian Federal prison at Steir where he was serving a life sentence for war crimes. Persistent reports have had him popping up in Vienna to recruit former colleagues for work with the Soviets or KGB; several reports have said that he is a lieutenant colonel of Volkspolizei, but working with the KGB in the Bautzen area. One of those reports (ZIPPER) states that he is working as a cryptanalyst, which was known to be his forte. However, since the 1945 interrogation report on SANITZER states definitely that he was not a code expert, but rather an extremely skilled communications CE man, we can regard the ZIPPER report with a certain amount of skepticism. According to the latest information available to WGB, offensive operations against the East are conducted by WGB's task level offices, the Kreis offices concerning themselves exclusively with internal security work. Since Bautzen is not a Soviet stronghold, SANITZER (supposing that he is there) is presumably concerned with some sort of specialized work. Accordingly, he should be given more attention of access than the ordinary KGB officers.

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3. The points advanced above argue against an operation aimed at SANITZER; at the very least they argue that the premise of any operation aimed exclusively at SANITZER is rather slight. They also more or less rule out any operation aimed at him directly, or aimed at Bantson. In effect, the best remaining possibility is to throw out a bait which might be taken by SANITZER, or failing him, by another big fish.

4. We, therefore, propose that after checking him out you make an approach to HUBER, offering him AIS assistance in his legal affairs and financial assistance in building a new career. [] has checked the HICOG docket here in Frankfurt and found out that the warrant for HUBER's extradition has lapsed, and that no one is pursuing the case. If he were to be arrested he could not be held, though if the Austrians were informed of his arrest they might well renew their request for his extradition. The further progress of the case, in [] opinion, would depend on how badly the Austrians want him. But considering the state of current German public opinion we can probably promise HUBER that we can intervene to block any extradition move - and we can also guarantee that he will not be considered a spy for the East. If HUBER could be brought to cooperate, he should then be instructed to write a letter to East Zonal authorities, outlining his precarious existence since the war, and complaining that the future offers no possibilities worthy of mention to a former Gestapo general. His pitch would then be that he is willing to work for the East, provided they assure him a job commensurate with his experience and ability, but that he is not willing to present himself in the East Zone without such assurances, which must be backed up by someone of position in the East whom he knows and can trust. If at all possible, this letter should then be delivered by a courier who has some standing in Eastern eyes, however slight, and no knowledge that HUBER is playing with the Americans. The best addressee might be the Ministry of the Interior. And a channel might be found through the KPD.

5. No doubt the SED (or whoever finally get the letter) will regard it with considerable skepticism. But if the DDR authorities are informed on HUBER's circumstances, or take the trouble to inform themselves, and if he is a tempting recruit for them, they may decide to open preliminary negotiations with him - since they would lose nothing, at the outset at least. As great hope, which may be very illusory indeed, is that they will use SANITZER, or SANITZER's name in opening this correspondence. HUBER's next gambit would be to propose a meeting. It could be conducted either in Berlin or the International Sector of Vienna, but in spite of the fact that HUBER is wanted in Austria, Vienna is probably better - after all he is wanted in Germany too (or thinks he is) and he can probably make a good case for preferring to go east.

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through Austria, his old stamping grounds, rather than to Berlin. If the opposition accepted this gambit, HUBER could proceed back to Vienna for a meeting either with or without our assistance. The next stage would depend almost entirely on whom the opposition sent to represent them. But the chances are that if they sent anyone at all he would be an ex-Gestapo type of HUBER's acquaintance, and therefore precisely as easy or hard of approach as is SANITZER. The nature of the play would have to be determined after HUBER's first definitive meeting.

6. We fully realize that the approach sketched above has holes in it, and that there are objections which could easily be raised. But it does seem to offer about a ten percent chance of success, which is as much as can be expected of any provocation. The basic approach which has been tried by ZIPPER in this case is to send an agent belonging to SANITZER's old circle of acquaintances either to his circle of relatives or to ROR authorities. No success has come of these efforts. We feel that probably no success will come of them in future. If we consider that former members of the Gestapo now serving the KSS are interesting and approachable targets, and presumably we do, then the HUBER lead must be characterized as one of the more promising ones we are likely to get, so far as entries into this particular set is concerned.

7. We hope that KOS will agree with the premises of our argument and will take up the proposed operation. This proposal does not pretend to be a full operational plan, but only a suggestion how HUBER might be used and what might be done. Your own decisions and HUBER's contacts and capabilities will govern the operation. We send it to you as a rough operational plan, recommending it to your attention and soliciting your comments.

Approved By:

12 August 1953

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